

Top stories: “Tom Joad” (love that USSA stuff); “Horse Meat” (caught me out there, Brian); “Epsilon Dreams” (Eric strikes again); “The Coming of Vertumnus” (this one still haunts me). Top non-fiction: “Ansible Link” (the eagerly awaited). And even though I have no idea what John Clute is going on about, I’m an avid reader of his book-review column. – **Paul Hood**, Tiptree, Essex.

By all means indulge Newman & Byrne’s love for their imaginary timeline, but please don’t do it in the pages of *Interzone* any more. It’s a real shame too, because the authors’ other stories are of a much higher standard, as demonstrated by the hugely enjoyable “Cyril the Cyberpig” in *IZ* 66. – **Steve Wiles**, Witham, Essex.

I have enjoyed more of the stories in this year’s *IZ* than ever before. It was good to see that Kim Newman and Eugene Byrne finally managed to write a decent story set in the USSA, and it was pleasing to find it as exciting as I did. Even those stories that I felt were worth mentioning as being not to my taste were better than those published in previous years – all, that is, except “Horse Meat.” I really despised both you and Brian Aldiss for springing this nightmare upon me. I hated Brian more for writing it so well, and in truth it is the most well crafted piece of pornography I have ever read. – **David Smith**, Grays, Essex.

The “Horse Meat” controversy: as usual, some people have failed to take into account the difference between a disgusting, evil action described in its moral context, and such an action described merely in order to titillate the reader. I suppose this was to be expected. As for me, I think “Horse Meat” is the best thing to come from Mr Aldiss since the 1970s; I hope he will not be put off by the idiots and will continue to produce work of this standard. – **P.J.L. Hinder**, Bristol.

Brian Aldiss should be damned, or get help, for his contribution. But the person or committee that published his effort should be given the one choice: they should be damned. And you know what you can do with my subscription. – **J. McDonald**, no address given.

Now we’ve had the gruelling lesson from the best sf writer alive in Mr Aldiss’s “Horse Meat,” which got so near to realistic depiction of the true decadence of humanity under the influence of dehumanizing thought-processes and the society they give rise to, but which fell at the last hurdle trying to concentrate too many almost cute details of coincidence and drawingroom sentimentality into the

final horrific but finally horrifically-contrived ending...now that we’ve had the lesson, with subsequent credits to Amnesty International, whose reports need no artifice to enthrall the horrified imagination, can we steer the material of *Interzone* clearly out of the splatter-horror realms please? – **Syd Foster**, Swansea.

Best stories: “Horse Meat” (Aldiss), “Built on Blood” (Storm Constantine), “Testimony” (William F. Temple), “Britworld” (James Lovegrove). How about more stories which give optimistic solutions to the problems in all those bleak futures? – **Pete Adams**, no address given.

Winner, by a snout, of the best short story of 1992 was “Cyril the Cyberpig” by Eugene Byrne. It was witty, original, inventive and well-plotted. Most importantly, it was a perfectly believable near-future scenario despite the slightly whimsical feel: we only have to look at listings of our television programmes to see the trends in mass entertainments and recognize Cyril’s society as being one possible result of them. Other good pieces of fiction include Kim Newman’s “SQPR,” which had a similar theme and feel to “Cyril the Cyberpig” but didn’t quite reach the same dizzying heights. – **M. Heard**, Nottingham.

I consider *IZ* the best sf magazine published. What sets your magazine apart from others is the interesting and varied non-fiction. I am also impressed by the range of fiction – from experimental to traditional, and from fantasy to hard sf. Your ability to “discover” new writers is also impressive. I am particularly impressed by Greg Egan, Ian MacLeod and Nicholas Royle. I consider the U.S. subscription price very reasonable, and more than justified by the quality of the writing. – **Richard Marshall**, Rock Island, Illinois.

Let us thank you for having provided a year of enthralling fiction. We really enjoyed it very much. Even if we truly like hard science-fiction stories, we particularly appreciated the special fantasy issue (*IZ* 60). – **Ann & Prene**, Rhode Saint Genese, Belgium.

It’s not that I’m against fantasy. Kilworth’s “The Sculptor” was excellent, and Robert Irwin’s good piece in issue 58 was clearly more fantasy than sf. But, Kilworth aside, the stories in the fantasy number seemed so short of interesting ideas, so happy to regurgitate the same tired formulae, I closed the issue feeling seriously depressed. Every time I read the word “elf” in future, I’ll reach for my gun. – **Tim Lees**, Manchester.

Best fiction: Newman/Byrne, “Tom Joad.” Best non-fiction: Brian Stable-

ford, “Adolf Hitler, His Part in Our Struggle.” Best cover: Mark Harrison, November. Best illustrator: Martin McKenna. – **Olaf Bultmann**, Bielefeld, Germany.

I have been subscribing to your magazine for around three years, and have not yet written to tell you how much I look forward to it poking its face through the letterbox each month. The Bob Shaw special issue, in particular, was excellent. I am not a well-read sf fan, and the main reason I buy the magazine is to find out about new (to me) authors. I thank you for introducing me to Dan Simmons, Robert Holdstock, Stephen Baxter and, now, Bob Shaw. – **David Hedges**, Morden, Surrey.

The Bob Shaw special: I do realize that it’s good publicity for you to do this kind of thing from time to time, but why not pick a less established but still “known” writer – e.g. Greg Egan or Eric Brown. They probably need the publicity more than Mr Shaw does, and, generally speaking, they write better stories. – **P.J.L. Hinder**, Bristol.

Issue 67 is by far one of the best I have read. I loved the story by Bob Shaw, “Time to Kill.” I think it will be on the Best Of list for 1993. “Gravity Brothers” by Stephen Blanchard was excellent, as was “Pilgrim 7” by Stephen Baxter. “The Dead” by Harrison and Ings I couldn’t get into. – **D.G. Plaiter**, Southsea, Hants.

I think you are doing a very commendable job: you have yet to publish anything I consider “duff,” but some stories are better than others. I have particularly enjoyed the Molly Brown offerings. I’m afraid “Ansible Link” loses me, but then I’m only a recent subscriber (introduced via the *New Scientist* mail shot). – **K.J. Shotton**, Stoke-on-Trent.

I’ve been reading your magazine since the first issue and I’ve been pleased to see it becoming progressively stronger. Having said that, I must admit that my favourite stories of all were the M. John Harrison ones that you carried in your early issues. The most interesting author introduced to me by *Interzone* is probably Greg Egan. – **Martin Haynes**, Uttoxeter, Staffs.

The balance of articles vs fiction is about right (higher than most other sf magazines). The idea of bibliographies is good. Personall, I would prefer longer stories. The novella is my favourite length. With six stories in an issue, it is like having a selection of six entrées instead of a balanced meal. Finally, a plea for my favourite authors: articles on, or interviews with, Michael Bishop and Judith Moffett would be appreciated. – Illegible signature, Norway (?).

1990: Greg Egan, “Learning to Be Me”
1991: Greg Egan, “The Infinite Assassin”

New Nightmares

Watch out for a three-part Channel 4 Television series in the “Without Walls” arts slot on Tuesday nights, beginning 13th April 1993. With the overall title “New Nightmares,” this promises to be one of the most serious treatments of science fiction that British television has yet given us.

Part One, “Nature Says No” (13th April at 9pm), is about science fiction and environmental themes, and interviewees include J.G. Ballard, Michael Crichton, James Lovelock and Kurt Vonnegut.

Part Two, “Man-Machine” (20th April), is about sf and the human-computer interface, featuring interviews with William Gibson, H.R. Giger, Marvin Minsky and Bruce Sterling.

Part Three, “Them” (27th April), is about sf and perceptions of the alien, with interviewees including Brian Aldiss, Martin Amis, Ballard and James Herbert.

Others to be featured, although we don’t know which parts they will be in, include Greg Bear, John Brunner, Marge Piercy and film director Richard Stanley. Each programme is about 55 minutes long. This series sounds distinctly promising!

There will also be a major Channel 4 science-fiction movie season starting on 13th April (with *2001: A Space Odyssey* for openers, and 13 other films to follow) and at least one other documentary programme on an sf-related theme before the season comes to an end on 28th May 1993.

(David Pringle)

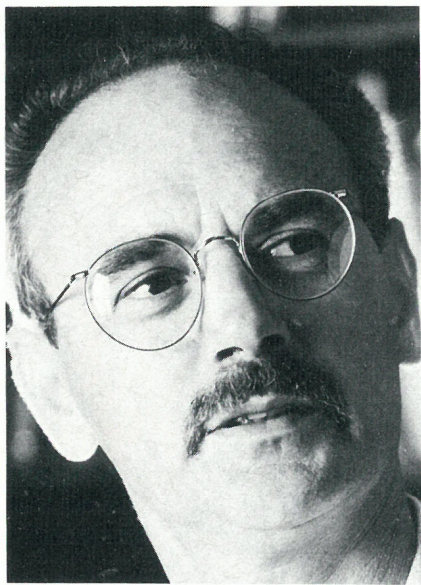
Interaction

Dear Editors:

Interzone 69 just received. I must say I read your bit on page 5 with total bemusement (“Can You Tell Them Apart?”) What are you suggesting we should have done?

Brian D’Amato’s *Beauty* and Sheri Tepper’s *Beauty* are both American novels, the former published by Delacorte, the latter by Doubleday. Which author should we have asked to change their title, and what to do? (Incidentally, Robin McKinley’s *Beauty* didn’t cause us any problems at all: we were more worried about a glitzy novel Grafton published a couple of years ago – *Beauty*, by Lewin Joel. Obviously you missed it.)

We were a bit bothered when it appeared that we were publishing *Morningstar* by Peter Atkins and *Morningstar* by Erin Pizzey in the same



Garry Kilworth

season, but then their publication dates shifted apart (though Pizzey’s *Morningstar* then appeared in the same month as Dave Gemmell’s, which we didn’t know about). But the books are so dissimilar in content, packaging and likely audience – dissimilar, in fact, in every respect save that *Morningstar* is the only logical title for each of them – that we didn’t feel that any actual confusion would be caused. Nor has it been.

And things can only get worse: this June Gollancz are publishing Garry Kilworth’s new novel *Angel*, while HarperCollins are publishing Barbara Taylor Bradford’s new novel, you guessed it, *Angel*. Ramsey Campbell’s *Angel* hasn’t, as far as I know, been written yet. Millions of readers will be terminally confused. Or not. Personally, I think they’ll be able to tell the difference.

Tell Langford that I’m still in exactly the same job as I’ve had since October ’91. I’d tell him myself but, of course, I don’t have time. Also, it was Barbados.

Malcolm Edwards

HarperCollins, London

Editor: And I’ve just read a fine novel called *Angel* by Elizabeth Taylor (1957; but currently available in a Virago paperback edition). It’s loosely based on the career of bestselling novelist Marie Corelli (and no, its author is not the Elizabeth Taylor). It’s high time there was a moratorium on certain titles, among them *Beauty*, *Morningstar* and *Angel* (and Mantis, and half a hundred others...).

Dear Editors:

I was intrigued by Elizabeth Counihan’s story “Remember Me” (*IZ* 68), set at the Cretaceous-Tertiary boundary. It gives support to the argument that sf should be written by those outside the sciences concerned. Her point that

intelligent life, and even high culture, could have existed some sixty-five million years ago without leaving traces that we could recognize today is, so far as I can see, perfectly correct, yet not one that would occur to a geologist.

My objections to the story can mostly be dismissed as nit-picking, but there is one that raises a larger issue. Ms Counihan implies that the “Great Freeze” that killed off the dinosaurs was the result of greenhouse gases or radioactive pollution produced by the dinosaurs. There is increasing evidence for the “impact hypothesis” that the collision of an asteroid with the earth caused this extinction. The alternative theory, that it was the consequence of a series of vast volcanic eruptions that covered southern India in a pile of lava flows that is still a mile thick, is less likely, but still does not fit the story.

Is this distortion of the scientific evidence, merely to point a moral, acceptable artistic licence? I do not think it is. After all, if you want to warn about impending ecological crises, there are plenty of earlier such crises in human history and prehistory! Do other readers agree?

David Stephenson

Keighley, Yorks

Dear Editors:

It has been a long time since a story has moved me as much as Astrid Julian’s “Irene’s Song” in *Interzone* no.69. I have been studying the history and situation in Yugoslavia in order to write an essay on the subject. Nothing I have read yet has brought home so clearly the suffering of the people. In the conflicting views of Tito’s Partisans, nothing I have read points to the cruelty they perpetrated on the Germans. Although, knowing what humans are capable of, it is well believable.

Susan Carr

London

Editor: The remainder of this issue’s letter column consists of brief comments extracted from notes which accompanied votes in the readers’ poll for 1992. Thanks to everybody for writing.

Interzone’s strengths remain, firstly, its literary quality – there’s usually at least one story per issue that could rank among the best modern short fiction of any type; secondly, the variety of work published, everything from genre sf to fantasy and near-mainstream; thirdly, the chance to watch new and newish writers develop alongside old hands (Stephen Blanchard, forexample, seems interesting). OK, I could gripe about a few things – but that’s what “variety” is all about. – **Tim Lees**, Manchester.

Continued on page 63